2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F7417 Ngonde F7417
Nyakyusa

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A Nyakyusa and Ngonde round the open grave

[facing p. 20]

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

764 Besides fighting, the dancers indulge in an orgy of destruction,
535 dashing at the bananas and *four* saplings (which surround the
721 swept courtyard) with their spears.

764 The dance was thus, traditionally, a common form for the ex-
535 pression by the dancers of a considerable range of emotions, vary-
152 ing from an intolerable burden of grief and fear to a recognition of and salute to the warlike quality of the dead men and a vivid consciousness of their own. And this last feeling passed easily into actual fighting.

764 To-day it is not so much into the excitements of warfare that
534 the feelings turn, but rather into those of love. Burial dances are
832 the occasions of much sexual display, of the beginning of some love affairs and the consummation of others, and this is nothing new. 'At a death people did not want war (though it came sometimes), they wanted love-making: they displayed the pride of their strength!' 'We speared one another . . . our wives called the war-cry when they saw the strength of their husbands.'

777 Dances of sexual display, on occasions other than burials, are
535 traditional among the Nyakyusa; but all our informants are
837 unanimous in declaring that both these other dances and the dances of burial are far more frequently followed by lovers' meetings than they used to be. For the enforcement of peace among the Nyakyusa has been accompanied by the prohibition of violence of any kind; and this has freed sexual passion from its rigid traditional bonds. Girls are married young and engaged younger; and [611] while formerly any man who seduced or even flirted with another man's betrothed or wife was speared or tortured by the husband and his friends if they caught him, such punishments are now illegal and the present fine of cattle is a far less effective deterrent. 'In the old days love-making only went on in secret; if a man stood and talked to a woman he expected to be speared. But now the Europeans have introduced the custom of making love openly!' (i.e. by forbidding the previous penalties.)

764 For all the younger men and women, save the chief mourners
535 and close friends, the quality of the burial dance is now pre-
832 dominantly and openly sexual. But the older people are, on the one hand, more conscious of its warlike associations and, on the other hand, inclined to regard the whole occasion more soberly than their juniors. 'There are two reasons for coming to a burial: the old men come to mourn their friend, they say: "Let us go and mourn him"; but the young men say: "Let us follow the

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
KuKwe

medicine and beans into his two hands and K. helped him to throw them into the pot. As he did so K. and N. both said for him: 'This is the ritual of my grandmother.' Then Sijele gave him the water calabash and K. helped him to pour, while the same words were said for him again. Sijele did the same for K. and his brother in turn. She began each time by putting powder and beans and pouring water into the pot, and then K. followed suit, and his brother after him. For K. she said: 'This is the ritual of my mother,' and he repeated: 'This is the ritual of my mother, Sandumi'; for the brother she said: 'This is the death of my mother,' and he repeated the same words. 764

The ritual was interrupted once or twice by discussion. The child's hands got burnt in throwing the beans into the pot and there was a pause for comment and comfort. When Sijele said for the child: 'This is the ritual of my wife,' N. said: 'Let him say "of my grandmother".' Neither of the young men was very serious, and each laughed as he finished his words.

We went quietly (by pre-arrangement) to a neighbour's homestead, stumbling in the darkness, and cut a stem of banana. We made a noise doing so but the householder stayed quiet. K's younger brother picked up the stem from the ground and ran off home with it, while the rest of us set up a hue and cry, following him at a run and calling: 'Thief, thief, he's stolen a banana stem!' Still the householder stayed quiet. This is the custom, the owners say nothing, it is the party of the 'thief' that pursue him. This stem, they told me, would be kept and used later.

So we entered the house again. Kalata had previously borrowed a harp (*ilipango*) of four strings and asked a neighbour to come and play it. The three principals, Sijele, and the player, stood up and began to circle round the fire slowly, stepping rhythmically and saying: 'Good-bye, go to father! Good-bye, go to mother!' Sijele and N. had previously told them the words and the tune. The fire burned up brightly and flickered on the circling figures, the leader crouching to his harp, while the beans steamed in the pot. Sijele held a winnowing basket full of dry pods of oil-seeds (*inyemba*) in her hands. The three principals reached into the basket as they circled and crushed them in their fingers till the seeds fell out. Then N. called out: 'Now then, stamp the stamping dance (*ukukanya inganya*)!' The harp-player stopped playing while the three principals stamped and stamped near the fire calling the war-cry as they did so. No words were spoken. [534] 764 535

Two leaves were then placed on the ground, one sweet banana, one plantain, on top of each other. Sijele and the three principals knelt round them, and N. told them the words and the tune. Then these four beat the leaves as if they were hand drums, singing: 'The ritual of my father (*syeku, syeku*), the ritual of my mother: the ritual of Mwaijagila, Mwalibuti, Malambaiaga, Kisinile, Lambwe (these are the praise- 764 533

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

[Frontispiece]

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AN ITINERANT ENTERTAINER.

He is dressed in skin and feather head-dress, armlets, skin kilt, and body rings, the number of which latter indicates his social position. He carries, as professional properties, a spear, a skin pack, rattles, horns, bells, and a stringed musical instrument.

[FACING p. viii]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

782 dare not greet their children on their return without the safeguard
789 of protective medicines. At a celebration the Kinga priests took
751 medicines, 'powdered medicine which comes from Mwemusi and Mwakalukwa [the Kinga chiefs]', and smeared it on Lwembe's forehead and shoulders 'because the grove is great. If you entered it without this medicine you died'; they gave the Lwembe the medicine 'so that Kyala (*vide* pp. 17-18) might not kill him, that he might show respect and escape'.

783 Another medicine, *imbinga*, which is red in colour, was brought
789 from BuKinga to smear on the foreheads of the children of the Lwembe and Kissoule, the priest, when these two returned home after celebrating in the grove. Their senior wives 'would smear the *imbinga* on the children's foreheads, when they would turn round calling: "You hit us", and Mwakisiya (56) (the Lwembe) and Kissoule (the priest) would both reply: "No, I am innocent (*mwelu*)." The medicine was smeared on the children because Mwakisisya and his fellow thought: "How can we meet them, how can they look on our bodies, since we are taboo from the ritual." Yes, the words are the same as in the twin ritual, but the medicine is different.' During one of the rituals we attended, Mwakilima (111) begged the Kinga priests to bring him some of this medicine for the protection of his children.

778 The numinous quality of everything connected with Lubaga
789 can hardly be exaggerated; the Nyakyusa believe that it overcomes even curious Europeans. The most sacred and terrible object of all was the drum which was polished with blood, the blood of children, who, in Nyakyusa thought, had died for the people, that the country might live and be fertile. 'Formerly,
[782] when the Kinga came with a drum, they said: "Catch the child of a commoner, fat and strong, hide him in the drum." In the old days when the Kinga came beating their drum, ping . . . ping . . . [single strokes with long intervals] we of the country used to run away and women would hide their children for fear lest they be snatched up and put in the drum.'[1] The child was strangled

[534] [1] These statements were made by three different groups of informants independently. All had special knowledge of these matters. The *ilikole*, the sacred drum of the Kinga, differs in shape from the Nyakyusa *indingala*. It is made of *nkuju* wood and ox-hide and is beaten when a ritual is celebrated and to summon men to war. The Kinga do not dance to drums and the Nyakyusa did not do so formerly either, but after the Europeans arrived Nyakyusa chiefs began to buy *indingala* from outside BuNyakyusa, paying a bull for a set—'a mother drum and her children'. Only quite recently have Nyakyusa craftsmen learnt from a Henga immigrant to make *indingala*.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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and its body taken to Lubaga and added to the 'medicine for fertility' (*umkota gwa ifuga*) which was sprinkled throughout the country, starting at Lubaga, proceeding to the other sacred groves, and then to the ordinary homesteads. Thus the terror of the grove had objective roots in the fact of human sacrifice, but it is rather a fear of the unknown and miraculous than of death itself; a fight involving casualties was not terrible in the same way as the grove and the throb of the sacred drum.

The Kinga priests travelled 'the road of Lwembe', down the escarpment of the Livingstone mountains from Mwakalukwa's country and across Selya, beating their drum. They stopped to sleep at the home of Kasitile the priest, and poured a libation of beer at 'the places where Lwembe had rested': Isumba, a hill overlooking Kasitile's homestead, Kituli in Mwaipopo's country, and near the homestead of the priest Munyoso.[1] 'He [Lwembe] used to shout on Isumba, the little hill here, then no one would cut the trees on the hill,' said Kasitile. 'It was one of his resting places; he used to come here to tell my grandfather to go and get a cow for Lubaga, and later to tell my father to do so. . . .' The beer is poured at the base of an *nkuju* tree (a variety of *ficus*) at Isumba, in the long grass in Kituli, and at the base of an *nkuju* near Munyoso's homestead. 'They pour [it] out here by the *nkuju*, they beat the drum to say: "We have come", then the people of Munyoso hide their children—that's of old.' Besides the drum the Kinga travelled with a kudu horn[2] (blown in battle in BuKinga) and a sacred drum and horn were lodged in the hut of the Lwembe's chief wife. Before they start the Kinga priests make an offering of millet flour and beer in one of their own groves,[3] and leave there overnight the beer and salt and hoes which they will take to the Lwembe, 'that the aba-Ngulube (9) may see them before they go to Lwembe'.

At Lubaga there were several places of prayer and offering: the trees planted at the installation of the last living Lwembe (*vide infra* pp. 54-5), the trees planted at the installation of a previous

[1] Probably grandson of 84 and representative of a junior lineage to which priestly functions had been delegated.

[2] *Ulubilima* in Kinga, *isipaga lwaite* in Nyakyusa. cf. plate 5*b*.

[3] Nyandala, a Kinga chief, and two priests took Godfrey Wilson to a sacrifice in one of their groves. The form of sacrifice is very similar to that among the Nyakyusa save that the meat-offering is placed in the fork of a tree. The priests had gone very early in the morning 'to tell Bululile (the dead chief) "Do not be angry, a European comes to greet you".'

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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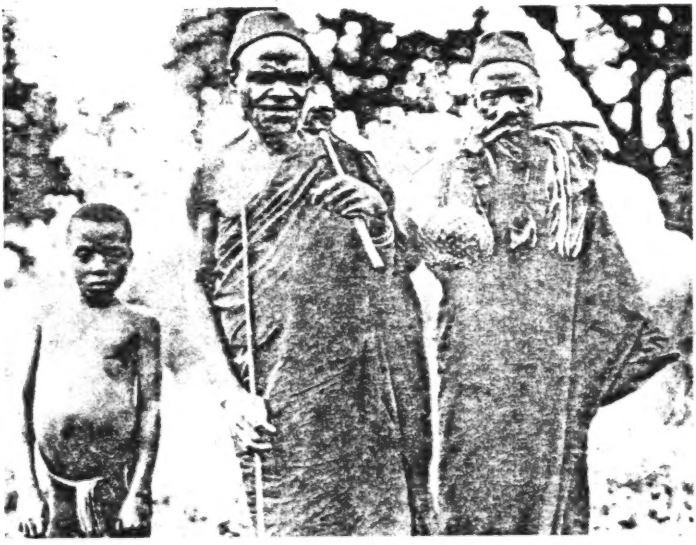

5*a*. PRIESTS OF LUBAGA (KINGA)

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5*b*. KINGA PRIESTS WITH HORN AND DRUM

[Facing p. 39]

13: Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

and other duties applicable to a girl after marriage. The practical instruction takes place in or before a special hut in the village under the leadership of the *abanyago (avanyago)*. The girl is admonished by the *unnyago* to obey her parents without any delay, to perform the commands of her mother immediately, e. g. to clean the hut, and especially to show obedience when guests are present. Should the mother blame her daughter unjustly, she should not reply. (The girl had been blamed in the earlier discussion that she had not swept the hut when her mother required her to do it). Then her duties and conduct towards her future husband were inculcated. As a wife she must never accept anything from the hands of her husband without kneeling and stretching out both hands, and turning away her face with eyes cast down. Also as a wife she must not hold her head up

Some of the drummers.

when she is addressed by a man. As a wife she must be anxious to prepare her husband's meal always at the right time, that means, it has to be ready when her husband returns from the field. If she sees her husband coming from the field, then she has to go to meet him, and take his hatchet from him. Should her husband scold her, she is not to reply; but she may ask her neighbours for help. It is one of her duties to take care of the regular cleaning of the hut[23]. The ashes must always be removed by her from the fireplace. If there are only a few ashes on the fireplace she must remove them with her hands[24].

[23] The place near the house where the sweepings are thrown down is called *urutagililo*.

[24] Cf. *Mackenzie*, p. 51, who refers to such moral instructions connected with puberty customs, probably at Karonga; cf. *Fülleborn*, p. 359 (Nygonde plain).